

Relationship of Knowledge and Attitude Towards Legal Abortion Laws with the Performance of Midwives in Qazvin, Iran

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Abortion is one of the main causes of maternal mortality. The lack of knowledge of physicians and midwives about the abortion laws can lead to the deficiency of presenting accurate information to pregnant women, and consequently to increase unsafe abortions. The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship of knowledge and attitude towards legal abortion laws with the performance of midwives in Qazvin, Iran.

Methods: This descriptive-correlational study was conducted on 122 midwives with private offices in Qazvin, Iran, from May to September 2012. The subjects were chosen according to the convenience sampling method. After obtaining informed consent for participation in the study, four questionnaires, including demographic characteristics, knowledge, attitude, and performance questionnaires were distributed by the researcher among the referrals.

Results: The obtained results showed that approximately half of the midwives had good knowledge about abortion laws (55.7%); however, their attitude towards abortion laws was mostly negative (86.9%). In addition, their performance of abortion was reported as average (60.7%). There was no significant relationship between the knowledge and midwives' performance; however, a significant statistical relationship was observed between their attitude and performance.

Conclusion: Regarding the fact that providing abortion services is one of the healthcare strategies for preventing the complications of unsafe abortion, it is advised to increase the knowledge level of medical personnel by including the relevant courses in the university, holding retraining courses and congresses on the issue of abortion, and informing new guidelines.

Keywords: Attitude, Knowledge, Legal abortion, Midwife, Performance.

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Introduction

Abortion is the termination of pregnancy before 20 weeks of gestation or with the fetus weight less than 500 g at birth (1). Generally, abortion falls into three categories, including spontaneous or habitual abortion, criminal or illegal abortion, and therapeutic or legal abortion (2). The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 50,000,000 pregnancies (25%) annually lead to abortion (3). In this regard, the complications of illegal abortion are more than those of other abortions. Moreover, the

complications of illegal abortion are among the most common causes of hospitalization in developing countries (4).

Most mothers placed in an unsafe abortion situation refer to the hospital only after serious complications; therefore, many cases of induced abortion are never recorded and reported. An estimated assessment provided by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education indicated that 80,000 abortions annually occur in Iran (5).